



MEETING OF THE

OPEN SPACE WORKING GROUP

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San Bernardino County: Gary Ovitt, San Bernardino County • Lawrence Dale, Barstow • Paul Eaton, Montclair • Lee Ann Garcia, Grand Terrace • Tim Jasper, Town of Apple Valley • Larry McCallion, Highland • Deborah Robertson, Rialto • Alan Wapner, Ontario

Tribal Government Representative: Andrew Masiel Sr., Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians

Ventura County: Linda Parks, Ventura County • Glen Becerra, Simi Valley • Carl Morehouse, San Buenaventura • Toni Young, Port Hueneme

Orange County Transportation Authority: Art Brown, Buena Park

Riverside County Transportation Commission: Robin Lowe, Hemet

Ventura County Transportation Commission: Keith Millhouse, Moorpark

**Tuesday, September 11, 2007
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**SCAG Offices
818 West 7th Street, 12th Floor
Conference Room - Riverside A
Los Angeles, CA 90017
213.236.1800**

**Teleconferencing Available:
Please RSVP with Christine Fernandez
24 hours in advance.**

If members of the public wish to review the attachments or have any questions on any of the agenda items, please contact Christine Fernandez at 213.236.1923 or fernande@scag.ca.gov.

Agendas and Minutes for the Open Space Working Group are also available at:
<http://www.scag.ca.gov/rcp/openspace.htm>

SCAG, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), will accommodate persons who require a modification of accommodation in order to participate in this meeting. If you require such assistance, please contact SCAG at (213) 236-1868 at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting to enable SCAG to make reasonable arrangements. To request documents related to this document in an alternative format, please contact (213) 236-1868.

Open Space Working Group

AGENDA

PAGE #

TIME

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

Liz Chattin,
Chair

2.0 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Members of the public desiring to speak on an agenda item or items not on the agenda, but within the purview of the group, must fill out and present a speaker's card to the assistant prior to speaking. A speaker's card must be turned in before the meeting is called to order. Comments will be limited to three minutes. The chair may limit the total time for all comments to twenty (20) minutes.

3.0 REVIEW and PRIORITIZE AGENDA ITEMS

4.0 CONSENT CALENDAR

4.1 Approval Item

4.1.1 Minutes of July 10, 2007
Attachment

01

5.0 INFORMATION ITEMS

5.1 Draft RCP Chapter – Open Space Attachment

Staff will present the draft Open Space Chapter of the RCP which includes the goals, outcomes and action plan.

Jessica
Kirchner,
SCAG Staff

04

1 hour

5.2 Ventura County Wildlife Movement and CEQA Guidance Projects Attachment

Liz Chattin will provide an overview of Ventura County's wildlife movement design and mitigation guidance.

Liz
Chattin,
Chair

20

45 minutes

6.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

7.0 STAFF REPORT

Staff will report on upcoming schedule and future topics.

Open Space Working Group

AGENDA

PAGE #

TIME

8.0 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Any Committee members or staff desiring to place items on a future agenda may make such request. Comments should be limited to three (3) minutes.

9.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting of the Open Space Working is scheduled for: **To Be Determined**

Open Space Work Group
of the
Southern California Association of Governments

July 10, 2007

Minutes

THE FOLLOWING MINUTES ARE A SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE OPEN SPACE WORKING GROUP. AN AUDIOCASSETTE TAPE OF THE ACTUAL MEETING IS AVAILABLE FOR LISTENING IN SCAG'S LOS ANGELES OFFICE.

The Open Space Working Group held its meeting at the SCAG Offices, Downtown Los Angeles.

Members Present:

Hon. Margaret Clark	City of Rosemead
Dan Silver	Endangered Habitats League
Frank Simpson	RMC
Scott Harris	CDFG
Jeff Harlan	Michael Brandman Associates
Robert Sun	UCLA
Ashwani Yasishth	Cal State University Northridge
Jade Lockhart	Amigos de los Rios
Jim South	Los Angeles County Parks & Recreation
Tracy Young	SGMRC

Video Conference:

Sibella Kraus	SAGE / Agriculture at the
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Teleconference:

Wendy Reed	Antelope Valley Conservancy
Jonathan Snyder	

SCAG Staff:

Jacob Lieb	Christine Fernandez	Jessica Kirchner
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1.0 CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLIGANCE

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m.

2.0 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No public comments were received.

3.0 REVIEW AND PRIORITIZE AGENDA ITEMS

4.0 CONSENT CALENDAR

4.1 Approval Item

4.1.1 Minutes of May 8, 2007

Motion was moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

5.0 INFORMATION ITEMS

5.1 New Ruralism Framework

Sibella Kraus, provided the group with a presentation via video conference regarding the efforts of the Agriculture at the Metropolitan Edge (AME) Program and the Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAGE) program. Ms. Kraus is currently the Director at the Agriculture at the Metropolitan Edge Program at UC Berkeley as well as the President of SAGE.

Ms. Kraus briefly described the AME Program at UC Berkeley which was formed last fall under the auspices of the Center for Global Metropolitan studies at UC Berkeley. This is an inter-disciplinary program which was founded a few years ago and looks at a whole range of issues surrounding the urban-rural interface of metropolitan areas. Issues include land use policies and economics, the role of local, small-scale agriculture, and preserving the vitality of rural communities. The idea of including the agriculture at the Metropolitan Edge Program was to really look at planning for agriculture as a part of a sustainable metropolitan region. The Metropolitan Edge is driven primarily by student interests who are studying both geography and landscape or ecology and planning and really want to be able to study sustainability in more depth and across more disciplines.

Ms. Kraus also discussed the SAGE center's New Ruralism and Urban Edge Agricultural Parks concepts. New Ruralism seeks to preserve and enhance rural areas near urban edges. Included in this strategy is the Agricultural Parks (preserves) concept that seeks to integrate working agricultural areas and parkland. This ranges from urban parks for both public land owners who want to expand sustainable agriculture and also the private land owners who want to create sustainable agriculture amenities for new developments. New Ruralism preserves would welcome the public as both visitors and residents. Ms. Kraus stated that this concept is exploratory and is intended to provoke discussion and response.

Hon. Margaret Clark, City of Rosemead, thanked Ms. Kraus for her presentation.

5.2 Ventura County Wildlife Movement and CEQA Guidance Projects

Item was postponed to the next OSWG meeting.

5.3 RCP Vision and Guiding Principles

Jessica Kirchner, SCAG, presented members with the Regional Comprehensive Plan draft Vision and Guiding Principles. Ms. Kirchner stated that as part of the RCP, staff has developed the Vision and Guiding Principles based on the Compass 2% Strategy. Working groups members were provided with copies of these for their reference and feedback.

Hon. Clark asked if the Principles could be amended to include preservation of open space. OSWG member asked what the fundamental relationship between the

working group and the ideas expressed in the working group is, given that several of the ideas that have been mentioned in the previous meetings are not reflected in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Ms. Kirchner stated that the Working Group's feedback is included in the Open Space chapter of the RCP. Ms. Kirchner will provide copies of the Open Space chapter at the next OSWG meeting.

Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League, referred to the draft Regional Open Space Program which was reviewed at the previous OSWG meeting and asked about the status of the feedback that was provided on the document. Ms. Kirchner stated that the document remained in development and will be provided for additional review at next month's meeting.

6.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

There were no items to report.

7.0 STAFF REPORT

There were no items to report.

8.0 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no future agenda items to report.

9.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m. The next meeting of the Open Space Work Group will be held at SCAG's Los Angeles office on September 11, 2007.

Open Space and Habitat

Introduction

“Social stability seems to vary inversely to the mental distance from fields and woods.”
Aldo Leopold

As the SCAG region rapidly urbanizes open space resources that enhance quality of life and provide environmental benefit are disappearing. In areas where development abuts natural lands or agricultural lands, these resources are often lost to make room for new development or to accommodate services for existing development. In urbanized areas, open space resources such as parks, trails and greenbelts are often scarce.

The three categories of open space addressed in this chapter, all of which have common attributes such as aesthetic, air quality, and water quality benefits. Each also offers unique benefits:

- **Natural Lands:** Natural lands are generally undeveloped and/or vacant lands with some natural vegetation and/or wildlife value, including lands used for grazing. These lands may include large and small blocks of habitat and the open space that links those blocks together. This includes habitat that has some level of existing protection (protected open space) or needs to be protected to preserve the ecological function and value of protected open space, especially areas that serve as wildlife linkages and areas with sensitive habitats not covered by existing conservation programs;
- **Community Open Space:** This includes areas that enhances the quality of life in urban areas and completes interconnected networks of parks, trails, greenbelts, community gardens, and urban forests serving the region's communities; and
- **Farmlands:** This category includes prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, unique farmland and farmland of local importance as defined by the California Department of Conservation. They provide food, products and economic benefits to the region and include the region's remaining prime and other important agricultural lands, especially farmlands intertwined with unprotected natural lands and developing communities.

There are numerous plans and programs throughout Southern California that attempt to conserve open space resources. Examples include:

- An open space element in a city or county general plan

- Natural community conservation plan (NCCP) and habitat conservation plan (HCP)
- Mandated management plans for public lands, such as the Southern California Forest Plan and California Desert Conservation Area Plan
- Integrated watershed management plans
- Open space acquisition and habitat enhancement programs implemented by the California Resource Agency, Conservancies, non-profit organizations and trusts
- Resource specific conservations strategies, such as South Coast Missing Linkages
- Open space and parkland acquisition programs implemented by public-private partnerships and individual conservancies
- Open space planning strategies and initiatives such as Green Visions

While these plans address open space issues, they do not on individually fulfill the need for a more holistic regional approach, one which evaluates the collective needs of the six-county SCAG region. SCAG's approach is to create a cohesive vision and a comprehensive open space strategy by tying together these plans and identifying additional opportunities for conservation.

Value of Regional Planning

Roles and Responsibilities

SCAG's role will be to:

- Maintain the regional open space database and use it to track progress in attaining regional open space conservation goals;
- Integrate the policies and actions herein into its existing transportation planning, growth forecasting, intergovernmental review, and legislative programs, and expand its capacity to provide technical services for open space planning;
- Establish a regional forum for coordinating existing programs and initiating new cooperative efforts; and

Open Space Resources:

Natural Lands: Undeveloped vacant land with natural vegetation, including lands used for grazing; lands with wildlife habitat.

Community Open Space: Public open space in or serving communities, such as park and recreation areas, community gardens, dedicated open space, urban forests, greenbelts, and trail systems.

Farmland: Prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, unique farmland, and farmland of local importance.

- Work in cooperation with its member agencies and open space conservancies in the region to find ways to supplement existing funding sources for open space conservation.
- Include open space mitigation policies and/or mitigation recommendations in the RTP;
- Use the inter-governmental review process to address the open space impacts of regionally significant projects;
- Propose legislative solutions; and
- Use its position as a regional planning agency to create and secure additional funding for open space conservation in the region.

SCAG's member agencies will be asked to:

- Propose and participate in cooperative conservation planning efforts;
- Adopt the regional open space policies presented in the program and apply those policies in planning and reviewing projects
- Provide updated information on local open space resources for inclusion in the regional open space database

Local conservancies and other interested parties will be invited to:

- Propose and participate in cooperative efforts with SCAG member agencies
- Provide updated information on local open space resources for inclusion in the regional open space database.

The goals and outcomes included in this chapter focus on the conservation of regionally significant open space resources.

Natural Lands

The sustainability of natural lands is directly related to maintaining large blocks of habitat (also called "cores"), keeping them relatively impervious to outside disturbance and allowing wildlife linkages to function. This network of large cores and wildlife linkages are part of an ecosystem where plants and animals occur in populations large enough that little human intervention is needed and natural ecological processes (predation, competitive interaction, natural disturbance and recovery) operate so that evolution is sustained. This vast connected landscape provides a sense of place and spiritual renewal that cannot be provided elsewhere. This network recharges the region's

watershed and water resources while combating the effects of air pollution and global warming.

Except for northern Ventura County, all natural lands in the SCAG region occur within three of the nine bioregions in Southern California: South Coast, Mojave Desert and Colorado Desert. Bioregions are areas that include multiple ecological communities based on common physical (climate, geology) biological (vegetation, wildlife) and environmental conditions. Northern Ventura County is unique in that it forms the southeast tip of the Central Coast bioregion and is located where five bioregions converge.

Many of the natural lands in the Southern California bioregions are large interconnected cores. However, near developed areas and along the regional highways, connections between large tracts of natural lands have been narrowed and fragmented and in some places permanently severed.

Wildlife movement corridors, or wildlife “linkages,” are an important component of natural lands in the region. Southcoast Wildlands, a nonprofit organization, evaluated and identified 70 linkages in the SCAG region as areas where natural connectivity is at risk. Figure 1 identifies these linkage areas.

Goals

Ensure a sustainable ecology by protecting and enhancing the region’s open space infrastructure and mitigate growth and transportation related impacts to natural lands by:

- Conserving natural lands that are necessary to preserve the ecological function and value of the region’s ecosystems;
- Conserving wildlife linkages as critical components of the region’s open space infrastructure;
- Coordinating transportation and open space to reduce transportation impacts to natural lands

Outcomes

- By 2035, increase the amount of protected open space in the region by at least 700,000¹ acres of natural lands that include important wildlife linkages, have special status habitats or species and/or buffer protected natural lands from development. The number of acres protected would be roughly proportionate to the urban footprint of the 2004 Regional Transportation Plan.

¹ From 2004 RTP PEIR p. 3.1-17 “In addition to direct impacts on land use, the urban footprint of new development supported by the 2004 RTP is expected to consume 500,000 to 700,000 acres of vacant, undeveloped land by 2030.” Direct impacts include 7,700 of grazing land, 1,400 acres of open space, 6,500 acres of prime farmland and 21,300 acres of vacant lands

- By 2012, put in place approved conservation strategies for all regionally significant wildlife linkages.

Natural Lands Action Plan

Constrained Policies

NOS 1 Track and monitor open space conservation efforts in the region.

NOS 1.01 SCAG shall set up a clearinghouse of important GIS data used for open space planning. SCAG shall maintain and update the regional open space database, track open space conservation and development in the region and will commit to providing annual updates on conservation efforts.

NOS 1.02 Local governments should consider the most recent annual report on open space conservation in planning and evaluating projects and programs in areas with regionally significant open space resources.

NOS 2 Use SCAG's Intergovernmental Review (IGR) process to comment on regional projects.

NOS 2.01 Local governments should be consistent with the open space conservation policies and goals of the RCP to be eligible for future funding opportunities and programs administered by SCAG.

NOS 2.02 Individual projects submitted for IGR review should either avoid significant impacts to regionally significant open space resources or mitigate the significant impacts through measures consistent with regional open space policies for conserving natural lands, community open space and farmlands. All projects submitted for IGR review shall demonstrate consideration of alternatives that would avoid or reduce impacts to open space.

NOS 2.03 SCAG shall establish criteria for evaluating impacts to regionally significant open space resources, and will recommend mitigation measures for significant impacts to regional resources. These recommendations will be included in SCAG's Regional Open Space Guidelines.

NOS 3 Develop and implement mitigation for open space impacts

NOS 3.01 SCAG shall promote the development and implementation of coordinated mitigation programs for regional projects, with an emphasis on regional transportation projects

NOS 3.02 SCAG shall produce and maintain a list/map of potential conservation opportunity areas. These conservation opportunity areas may be used by local governments and project sponsors as priority areas for mitigating impacts to open space resources. **(see SCAG's Regional Open Space**

Guidelines for a complete description of Conservation Opportunity Areas)

- NOS 3.03 SCAG shall work in partnership with state and federal agencies, local conservancies and other groups to conserve natural lands in key locations through existing conservation programs, mitigation for the impacts of regional projects and conservation compacts facilitated by SCAG.
- NOS 3.04 SCAG shall support policies and actions that preserve natural areas, areas identified in local, state, and federal plans.
- NOS 3.05 SCAG shall support the protection of vital resources such as wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, woodlands, production lands, and land containing unique and endangered plants and animals.
- NOS 3.06 SCAG shall encourage the implementation of measures aimed at the preservation and protection of recorded and unrecorded cultural resources and archaeological sites
- NOS 3.07 SCAG shall encourage "watershed management" programs and strategies, recognizing the primary role of local governments in such efforts
- NOS 3.08 SCAG shall support regional efforts to identify and cooperatively plan for wetlands to facilitate both sustaining the amount and quality of wetlands in the region and expediting the process for obtaining wetlands permits.
- NOS 3.09 SCAG shall work with County Transportation Commissions and Caltrans to refine the proposed open space consistency guidelines as necessary.
- NOS 3.10 Local governments and conservation organizations shall promote coordinated mitigation programs for regional projects and establish the basis for inter regional conservation strategies.
- NOS 3.11 Local governments should plan development in locations least likely to cause environmental impact.
- NOS 3.12 Project level mitigation for RTP's significant cumulative and growth-inducing impacts on open space resources will include but not be limited to the conservation of natural lands, community open space and important farmland through existing programs in the region or through multi-party conservation compacts facilitated by SCAG.
- NOS 3.13 Project sponsors should ensure that transportation systems proposed in the RTP avoid or mitigate significant impacts to natural lands, community open space and important farmland, including cumulative impacts and open space impacts from the growth associated with transportation projects and improvements.

- NOS 3.14 Project sponsors should ensure that at least one acre of unprotected open space is permanently conserved for each acre of open space developed as a result of growth that accompanies transportation projects/improvements.
- NOS 3.15 Projects that may affect natural open space, wildlife linkages or other regional open space resource, should employ best management practices to minimize impacts, when impact avoidance is not possible.

OS 4 Integrate open space assumptions into the Regional Growth Forecast

- NOS 4.01 SCAG shall prepare growth forecasts for the region that are based on assumptions that accurately reflect allowed uses on 1) existing designated open space 2) areas subject to regulations that preclude or limit uses and 3) areas where some or all of the lands are proposed for preservation under approved conservation programs.

OS 5 Seek funding for conservation of natural lands

- NOS 5.01 SCAG shall partner with local agencies and non-profit foundations in situations where a regional entity is necessary to secure funds.
- NOS 5.02 SCAG shall seek support (financial, technical, etc) at the state and federal level for a prototype regional open space database program.

Enabling Actions:

- SCAG will review and revise as necessary its existing data/databases, data sharing agreements and enter into agreements or partnerships with other data sharing groups as necessary.
- SCAG's will revise its IGR Guidelines to incorporate RCP open space policies and consistency guidelines for project review.
- Project sponsors will submit for IGR review all projects with potential open space impacts and demonstrate mitigation measures and alternatives to avoid impacts.

Multiple Benefits: Preservation of natural lands through development of an open space database and other initiatives described will facilitate regional planning for air quality, watershed management, water quality, land use/housing and transportation by providing a baseline description of the current conditions in the region and a context for evaluating the impacts of projects.

Strategic Initiatives

- SI1. SCAG shall seek to develop cooperative agreements and multi party conservation compacts to accelerate the conservation of natural lands in the region.

- SI2. SCAG shall put in place an open space funding program to demonstrate to state/federal agencies that SCAG is prepared to serve a regional entity to distribute state/federal funds for open space conservation.
- SI3. SCAG shall seek to create new sources of funding for open space conservation.
- SI4. SCAG shall establish decision-making tools for identifying and prioritizing open space conservation projects, such as those by the San Diego Association of Governments in distributing funding through the Transnet Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP).
- SI5. SCAG shall establish criteria for evaluating impacts to regionally significant open space resources, and will recommend mitigation measures for significant impacts to regional resources. These recommendations will be included in SCAG's Regional Open Space Guidance.
- SI6. SCAG shall develop Memorandums of Understanding with state and federal resource agencies as necessary to facilitate the conservation of natural lands.

Community Open Space

Community open space exists in or serves developed communities, examples include park and recreation areas, community gardens, dedicated open space, urban forests, greenbelts and trail systems. Sustainable community open space is accessible, whether on foot, on bicycle, or by riding transit. It is distributed so that it serves a wide range of user groups in the region, from children to seniors and features amenities that meet the recreation and outdoor needs of its diverse users. Sustainable community open space also fulfills multiple planning and quality of life objectives contributing to watershed and water quality, air quality management and public health.

Parks and Public Health

A 1996 report released by the U.S. Surgeon General found that people who engage in regular physical activity benefit from reduced risk of premature death; reduced risk of coronary heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and non-insulin dependent diabetes; improved physical functioning in persons suffering from poor health; and healthier cardiovascular, respiratory and endocrine systems. Physical activity also produces important psychological benefits relieving symptoms of depression and anxiety; improving mood and enhancing psychological well being.²

The link between obesity and community open space is particularly relevant. Over the last decade, California has experienced one of the fastest rates of increase in adult

² CDC. *Physical Activity and Health: A Report on Recommendations of the Task Force on Community Preventive Services*. Retrieved online August 23, 2007
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5018a1.htm>

obesity of any state in the nation.³ More than half of California adults now are overweight or already obese. Rates among African American and Latino adults, men over age 25 years, and adults with less than a high school education exceed 60 percent and there is no sign that the increases in obesity are slowing.⁴

The effects of obesity are putting a strain on the health care system and adding additional costs in loss of productivity. Estimated costs in California attributable to physical inactivity, obesity and overweight in 2005 were projected to reach \$28 billion. A ten percent improvement – just one person of ten who becomes more active and maintains a healthy weight over a five-year period – could result in savings of nearly \$13 billion.⁵

A report published by The Trust for Public Land concluded that strong evidence shows that when people have access to parks, they exercise more.⁶ In a study published by the CDC, creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity led to a 25.6 percent increase in the percentage of people exercising three or more days per week. The study also found that obesity is more likely in unwalkable neighborhoods, but rates of obesity go down as measures of walkability go up.⁷

SCAG evaluated the community open space availability in 16 cities in the region and compared them to the National Recreation and Parks Association standards recommended for park types.⁸ As measured against NRPA's overall parks to people standard (6.25-10 acres/1,000 people) three cities exceeded the standard (Irvine, Pomona and Ventura) while the rest of the cities fell below the standard. Table 1 shows the results for each of the cities.

³ CDC. *Prevalence of Obesity Among U.S. Adults by State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (1991–2001)*. Retrieved online August 23, 2007, http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/trend/prev_reg.htm.

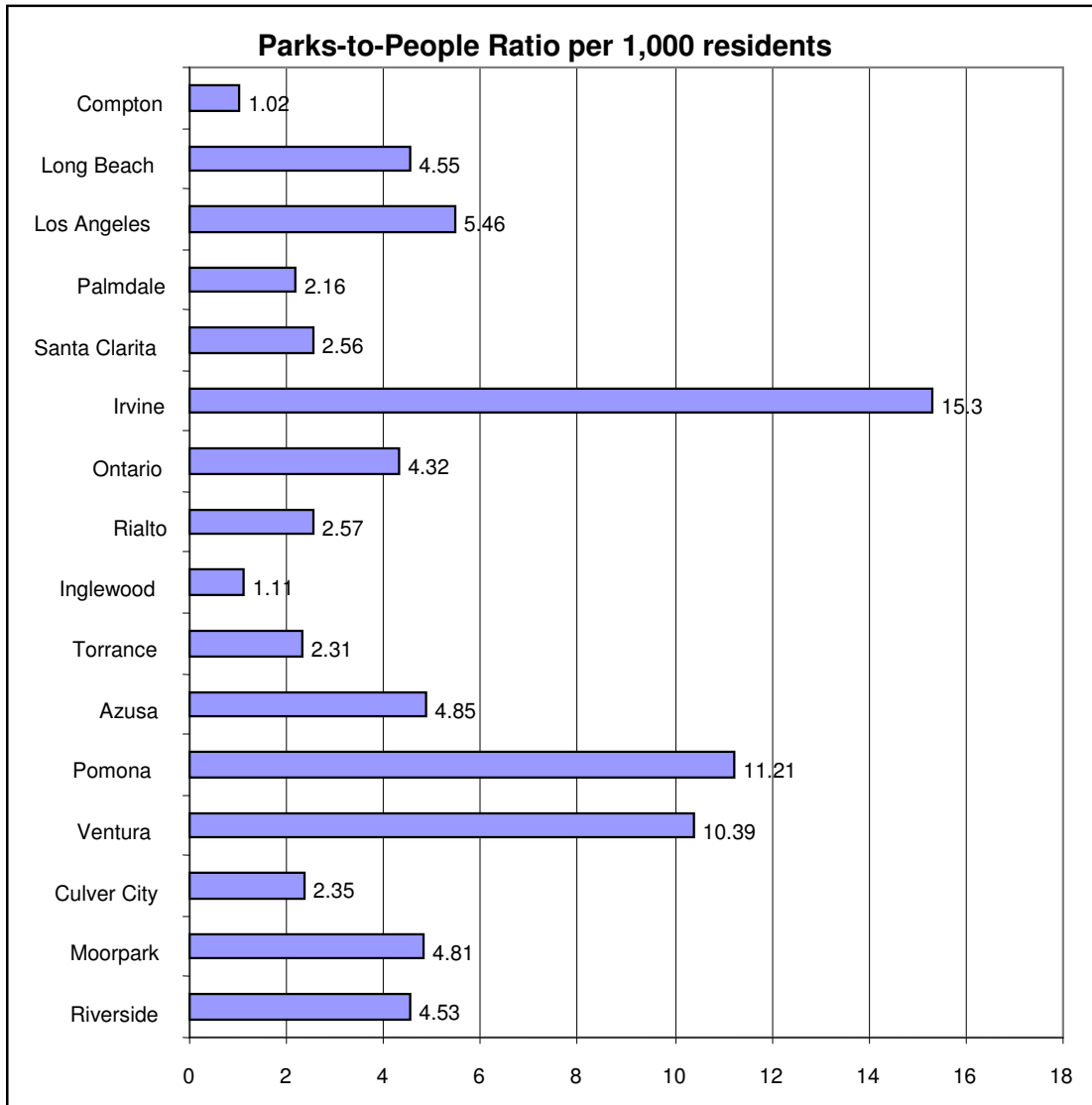
⁴ California Department of Health Services. *The Economic costs of Physical Inactivity, Obesity, and Overweight in California Adults: Health Care, Workers' Compensation, and Lost Productivity*. Retrieved online August 23 2007 <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/press/downloads/CostofObesityToplineReport.pdf>,

⁵ California Department of Health Services. *The Economic costs of Physical Inactivity, Obesity, and Overweight in California Adults: Health Care, Workers' Compensation, and Lost Productivity*. <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/press/downloads/CostofObesityToplineReport.pdf>, 2005.

⁶ The Trust for Public Land. *The Benefits of Parks*. Retrieved online August 23, 2007 http://www.tpl.org/content_documents/parks_for_people_Jul2005.pdf

⁷ CDC. *Increasing Physical Activity A Report on Recommendations of the Task Force on Community Preventive Services*. Retrieved online August 23, 2007 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5018a1.htm>

⁸ Complete results of the case studies are available in the *SCAG's Regional Open Space Program*, 2008



Goals

Enhance the region's parks, trails and community open space infrastructure to support the aesthetic, recreational and quality-of-life needs, providing the highest level of service to our growing region by:

- Creating new community open space that is interconnected, accessible, equitably distributed and provides public health benefits;
- Improving existing community open space through urban forestry and other programs that provide environmental benefits.

Outcomes

By 2035, all SCAG subregions have community open space systems that have an "above average" level of service (LOS).

An “above average” LOS for community open space, by 2012, in areas that participated in SCAG’s 2% Strategy demonstration projects.

From 2007 conditions, increase the percentage of transit trips that can access community open space in one hour or less by 2012.

Community Open Space Action Plan

Constrained Policies

COS 1 Enhance community open space and its accessibility

- COS 1.01 SCAG shall include a strategy for providing and conserving open space into all 2% strategy demonstration projects initiated after approval of the RCP.
- COS 1.02 SCAG and its member agencies will work with open space experts and community interest groups to develop a Level of Service ranking and evaluation system for community open space in the region (See description of LOS in SCAG’s *Regional Open Space Guidelines*).
- COS 1.03 SCAG shall support local jurisdictions and other service providers in their efforts to develop sustainable communities and provide, equally to all members of society, accessible and effective services such as: public education, housing, health care, social services, recreational facilities, law enforcement, and fire protection.
- COS 1.04 SCAG shall support local jurisdictions and other service providers in their efforts to develop sustainable communities and provide, equally to all members of society, accessible and effective services such as: public education, housing, health care, social services, recreational facilities, law enforcement, and fire protection.
- COS 1.05 SCAG shall encourage member jurisdictions to work as partners to address regional outdoor recreation needs and to acquire the necessary funding for the implementation of their plans and programs.
- COS 1.06 SCAG shall encourage member jurisdictions that have trails and trail segments determined to be regionally significant to work together to support regional trail networks. SCAG shall encourage joint use of utility, transportation and other rights-of-way, greenbelts, and biodiversity areas.
- COS 1.07 Local governments should prepare a Needs Assessment to determine the adequate community open space level for their areas.
- COS 1.08 Local governments should encourage patterns of urban development and land use, which reduce costs on infrastructure and make better use of existing facilities.
- COS 1.09 Local governments should increase the accessibility to natural areas lands for outdoor recreation.

COS 1.10 Local governments should promote infill development and redevelopment to revitalize existing communities.

COS 1.11 Local governments and project sponsors should utilize "green" development techniques.

COS 1.12 Local governments and project sponsors should promote water-efficient land use and development.

COS1.13 Local governments and project sponsors should encourage multiple use spaces and encourage redevelopment in areas where it will provide more opportunities for recreational uses and access to natural areas close to the urban core.

Enabling Actions:

- SCAG will revise its application forms and standard scope of work for the 2% Strategy demonstration projects to address open space. SCAG will develop guidelines in cooperation with member agencies for identifying protected and planned open space within jurisdictions.

Strategic Initiatives

SI1. SCAG will work with all subregions, counties and cities to prepare needs assessments and develop and refine LOS criteria (See description of LOS and Needs Assessment in SCAG's *Regional Open Space Guidelines*). The criteria established through the RCP and ancillary efforts will also be used as criteria for statewide bond funding.

Agricultural Lands

Sustainable farmlands, as they relate to open space, are operations that maintain the necessary level of food production for the region and are protected from urban encroachment. Conserving sustainable farmland is essential to the overall region as these lands play a key role in maintaining the interconnections of natural lands, community open space and farmlands.

California farmers and ranchers represent a diverse group of individual businesses, with great diversity in farm size and revenue. While globally, exports of agricultural products remain a key driver of agricultural profitability, new market incentives in areas such as renewable energy for production and the development of technologies to convert raw materials into "biofuels" can expand profitability and environmental sustainability opportunities for farmers.

Table 2 indicates the importance of agricultural lands to the region as demonstrated by the gross value of products sold. Based on the 2002 USDA Census of Agriculture, county level data, Imperial, Ventura and Riverside Counties round out the top ten

producing counties in the state, each with more than one billion in gross value of direct agricultural production.

Table 2 Total Agricultural Value by County*

	2005	2006	2002 State Rank**
Riverside	1,168,671,100	1,102,438,400	10
Orange	312,336,287	N/A	22
San Bernardino	565,101,000	435,787,200	15
Los Angeles	277,844,000	N/A	21
Ventura	1,225,109,000	1,508,174,000	9
Imperial	1,286,066,000	1,365,368,000	8

*Figures are based on total gross value as indicated in county agricultural reports for 2005 and 2006 (when available)

** based on total value of agricultural products sold

*** From the USDA 2002 Census of Agriculture county profiles

Sustainable Eating

The food that Southern Californians eat directly affects local and state policy and in turn, local and state policy affects the food Southern Californians eat. Currently, the federal government spends billions of dollars to subsidize grains and other crops while providing little support for fruits and vegetables. Rising health care costs and increases in diet related diseases such as diabetes and obesity indicate that healthier diets need to be a priority for the region.

Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Before a product can be labeled "organic," a USDA accredited certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket or restaurant must be certified and inspected also.

In the United States, certified organic food is grown according to standards set by the National Organic Program. According to those standards, Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones.⁹ In California, the California Department of Food and Agriculture's State Organic Program (SOP) oversees the California organic industry as a result of the federal 1990 Organic

⁹ United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) *Organic Production and Organic Food*. Retrieved online August 23, 2007 <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/ofp/ofp.shtml>

Foods Production Act. The SOP's purpose is to protect producers, handlers, processors, retailers and consumers of organic foods sold in California by enforcing labeling laws relating to "organic" claims for fresh agricultural products.¹⁰

Table 3 Organic Farmlands in the SCAG Region - 2005

	Organic Acres	Total Farmland*	Percent Share
Riverside	3,200	466,467	0.7
Orange	143	13,481	1.1
San Bernardino	244	34,673	0.07
Los Angeles	108	44,050	0.3
Ventura	4,712	297,074	1.6
Imperial	N/A	545,611	N/A

*Based on California Department of Conservation 2005 estimates, excludes rangelands/grazing lands

Goals

Preserve the productivity and viability of the region's agricultural lands while supporting a sustainable economy and region by:

- Maintaining a viable level of agriculture to support economic and food supply needs for the region while supporting sustainable energy, air quality and transportation policies;
- Promote and support a strong locally-grown food system by encouraging community farming and developing cooperative farming initiatives that use sustainable farming practices.

Outcomes

Enroll at least 6,500 acres in a new regional farmland conservation program and no net loss of farmlands enrolled in the regional program through 2035.

Increase the percentage of farms using organic farming practices.

Agricultural Open Space Action Plan

Constrained Policies

AOS 1 Preserve and promote the productivity and viability of agricultural lands

¹⁰ <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/fveqc/organic.htm>

- AOS 1.01 SCAG shall use its IGR process to review projects with potentially significant impacts to important farmlands and recommend impact avoidance and mitigation measures.
- AOS 1.02 SCAG shall work with its member agencies and the region's farmland interests to develop regional guidelines for buffering farmland from urban encroachment, resolving conflicts that prevent farming on hillsides and other designated areas, and closing loopholes that allow conversion to non-farm uses without a grading permit.
- AOS 1.03 Local governments should establish transfer of development rights (TDR) programs to direct growth to less agriculturally valuable lands (while considering the potential effects at the sites receiving the transfer) and ensure the continued protection of the most agriculturally valuable land within each county through the purchase of the development rights for these lands.
- AOS 1.04 Local governments are encouraged to obtain assistance from the American Farmland Trust in developing and implementing farmland conservation measures or avoid impacts to important farmlands.
- AOS 1.05 Local governments should avoid the premature conversion of farmlands by promoting infill development and the continuation of agricultural uses until urban development is imminent; if development of agricultural lands is necessary, growth should be directed to those lands on which the continued viability of agricultural production has been compromised by surrounding urban development or the loss of local markets.
- AOS 1.06 Project sponsors shall submit for IGR review projects with potentially significant impacts to important farmlands. Projects should include mitigation measures to reduce impacts and demonstrate project alternatives that avoid or lessen impacts.

AOS 2 Promote the availability of locally grown and organic food in the region.

- AOS 2.01 Local governments should ease restrictions on farmer's markets and encourage cooperative farming initiatives to increase the availability of locally grown food.
- AOS 2.02 Local governments should consider partnering with school districts to develop farm-to-school programs.

Strategic Initiatives

- SI1. SCAG shall work with the agriculture community and other interested parties to establish a regional Farmland Conservation Strategy.

- SI2. SCAG shall work with the state, local farming interests and other interested parties to refine or revise the Williamson Act, or develop a new alternative statewide farmland conservation strategy.

DRAFT

MEMO

DATE: September 11, 2007

TO: Open Space Working Group

FROM: Christine Fernandez, Assistant Regional Planner, (213) 236-1923, fernande@scag.ca.gov

SUBJECT: Ventura County Wildlife Movement and CEQA Guidance Projects

Background:

Liz Chattin will provide an overview of the Ventura County Planning Division's Fragmentation, Roads and Biodiversity Project. A spatial representation of the current status of Ventura County's wildlife movement will be shown. Liz Chattin will also provide a general review of the project design and mitigation guidelines that is being submitted to Ventura County's environmental review committee for adoption. These guidelines will become CEQA guidance for Initial Studies and Environmental Impact Reports.